

# Report

## Pu'ukohola Heiau National Historic Site

### ■ 1.0 Site Description

The Pu'ukohola Heiau National Historic Site is located on the northwestern shore of the island of Hawaii in the district of South Kohala. The site contains ruins of Pu'ukohola Heiau ("Temple on the hill of the whale") built by King Kamehameha the Great. The site also contains the ruins of John Young's house, who fought for King Kamehameha during the period of his ascendancy to power. The site was authorized a National Historic Site in 1972, and totals 85.30 acres: 60.93 acres of federal land and 24.37 acres of non-federal land. Guided and self-guided tours of the site are available through a temporary visitor center located on the site, and outside tour companies also stop at the site. Activities recommended at Pu'ukohola Heiau include hiking, observing plants on the trails, and bird-watching. Whale watching and shark sightings are also possible during the winter and spring months.

**Figure 1. Island of Hawaii and Pu'ukohola Heiau Site**



Visitation at Pu'ukohola Heiau is counted in two categories: recreation users of the site, and non-recreation users who drive through the site. During 1998, there were 57,364 recreation users, and 142,507 non-recreation users, totaling 199,871 visitors. Visitation is highest during August, when an annual event is held at the site, and is lowest in September. During August 1998 over 22,000 visitors came to Pu'ukohola Heiau. February visitation

was the second highest with approximately 17,000 visitors, and the rest of the months in 1998 had 14,000 to 15,000 visitors. During the months between February and May, inclusive, weekdays typically are higher visitation days than weekends due to school tours of the site. Recreation visitors, including commercial tour groups taking a self-guided tour typically spend between one-half hour to one hour at the site, whereas school groups stay one and one-half hours for an educational program and tour.

Traffic engineers evaluated the intersection at the main entrance to the site in 1989 to determine whether a left turn lane into the Park was needed. The study concluded that the Park would continue to monitor traffic flow at the intersection and would add a left turn lane when it became necessary. At this time, the Pu'ukohola Heiau site staff is taking actions toward the creation of the turn lane.

The Pu'ukohola Heiau National Historic Site does not have a General Management Plan, but is working from a Development Concept Plan dated 1989. The Concept Plan recommends the creation of a new bypass access road for the Park and the closure of the old road, which is a State Highway, because it bisects the park area. The surrounding community, represented primarily by the Kawaihae Homesteaders, generally supports the idea of a bypass road.

The Development Concept Plan also recommends a new parking area to accommodate 20 cars and two buses, which the park staff would like to increase to 30 cars and four buses when new plans are developed. The idea of expanding the parking area is in a very preliminary stage, and formal planning has not yet begun. An archeological study was conducted which determined there would not be any significant archeological impacts, but environmental impact studies have not been conducted yet due to the idea's preliminary and conceptual nature. Funding for expanded parking facilities would be part of the funds requested for a new visitor center. Current parking facilities are insufficient during special programs, offered six times a year, and on days when two or more buses are on the site at the same time. Current facilities provide space for one bus.

The Pu'ukohola Heiau National Historic Site is located within a National Historic Landmark Boundary, which has budgetary implications for road maintenance projects.

Just outside of the Park is a state recreational harbor. The Pu'ukohola Heiau site is working with the State Department of Transportation on the location of the access road to the new recreational harbor, which is planned to be a two-lane road just north of the Park.

## ■ 2.0 Existing ATS

The Park currently does not use ATS, with one exception. During special events, it has borrowed golf carts from a neighboring resort area, for use in transporting special needs visitors, including elderly and disabled, from the visitor center up the hiking trail to the temple sites.

### ■ 3.0 ATS Needs

ATS needs identified include the following:

- The acquisition of electric golf carts, or similar vehicles, to accommodate special needs visitors who currently are unable to visit the temples at the site. The temples currently are only accessible by walking up a steep hiking trail. NPS or concessionaire ownership will ensure availability of the vehicles.
- Recent years have seen an increase in ocean-liners coming into the harbor north of the Park. Discussions are being held regarding the need for vans or buses to transport visitors between the ships and the Park. Van or bus service between the two locations would help to promote the Park among a large group of tourists visiting the harbor.

### ■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

- The addition of electric golf carts at the site will enable more visitors to be served, improve visitor convenience and overall visitor experience for special needs visitors by increasing accessibility of the temples on the site to those who are not able to walk up trails.
- Recent years have seen an increase in ocean-liners coming into the harbor north of the Park. Discussions are being held regarding the need for vans or buses to transport visitors between the ships and the Park. Van service between the two locations would help to promote the Park among a large group of tourists visiting the harbor.

### ■ 5.0 Bibliography

Puukohola Heiau National Historical Site. Internet site: <http://www.nps.gov/puhe/>. Information printed November 1999.

### ■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Daniel K. Kawaiaea, Superintendent, telephone interview, November 1999